DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 786 SO 019 149

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TITLE Cross-Cultural Communication: An Essential Dimension of Effective Education.
INSTITUTION American Univ., Washington, DC. Mid-Atlantic Center for Race Equity.
PUB DATE 87
NOTE 46p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Biculturalism; *Black Culture; *Black Dialects; *Black Education; Communication Research; *Cross Cultural Studies; Cultural Influences; Curriculum Development; Elementary Secondary Education; English Instruction; *Intercultural Communication; Nonstandard Dialects; Regional Dialects

ABSTRACT

All language dialects are legitimate but some dialects achieve social prestige. Standard American English (SAE) represents that language in the United States. Minority students who do not learn SAE do not achieve academically as well as those who do. The dialect individuals use is determined by income, social class, ethnic group, and level of education. The failure to speak SAE effectively represents a barrier to those who speak less prestigious dialects such as Black English or Spanish Influenced English. This booklet is designed to be used by the classroom teacher to raise the cultural sensitivity of the instructor and to serve as a model for more effective teaching of SAE to minority students. Various tests and suggestions for lesson plans are provided, and a cultural bias self-test is included. Examples are given of test biases and communication differences, along with information on how to manage student misbehavior by teaching school norms. A 29-item bibliography concludes the document. (NL)

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3/29/88

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: AN ESSENTIAL DIMENSION OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATION

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Dedicated to the children
and future leaders of
the communication age
and the global society

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge Carol Y. Dudley and Cassandra Gilchrist for their assistance in the preparation of this manuscript.

FOREWORD

The academic underachievement of Black and Hispanic students is documented by the large gap between standardized test scores of minority and majority students and the continued high rate of suspensions and drop-outs among Black and Hispanic teenagers. This underachievement of a large and growing segment of our population is nothing short of a national crisis. By the year 2020, Blacks and Hispanics will comprise approximately 30 percent of our population. Labor force projections indicate a severe decline in the number of blue-collar jobs and a substantial increase in jobs that require high levels of technical skill. Given this economic picture, the crisis of underachieving minority students will become a central issue in determining our nation's economic survival. We can envision a large population of unemployed and, simultaneously, a severe labor shortage in numerous highly skilled occupations. It is doubtful the United States of America can maintain world leadership under these conditions.

Many explanations have been offered for underachievement of Black and Hispanic students including economics, social psychology, parents, community and environment. The Effective Schools Research makes it clear that whatever influence is exerted by these factors, schools can make a difference. Researchers who study effective schools have found schools serving lower-income Black and Hispanic neighborhoods where students' performance on standardized tests is average or above. While we may not be able to control other variables, evidence indicates that schools can have a significant impact on minority students' academic performance.

With this in mind, researchers have analyzed characteristics of effective school districts, school buildings, classrooms, and teachers. They have outlined effective instructional strategies. The Mid-Atlantic Equity Center has designed this publication series to address four essential characteristics of effective instruction identified by these researchers, including:

(1) teaching students to persist in their learning in *Learning to Persist/Persisting to Learn,*

(2) understanding cultural diversity and its importance in the classroom in *Cross-Cultural Communication: An Essential Dimension of Effective Education,*

(3) incorporating learning-style differences into curriculum and instruction in *Learning Styles: The Joy of Diversity,* and

(4) helping Black students to build positive academic self-concept in *Improving Student Achievement through Improving Self-Image.*

Learning to Persist/Persisting to Learn, the first in the series, will assist teachers to improve the academic self-concept of minority students by helping teachers: (1) understand why some students fail to successfully complete a task, (2) identify the non-persisting students, and (3) pinpoint curriculum and instructional strategies that can help students to learn to persist. Persistence is a learned behavior, and

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students from lower-income families are more likely than their middle-income counterparts to see adults who lack control of their environment and to see luck or chance as a more significant factor in success than effort or persistence. *Learning to Persist/Persisting to Learn* helps teachers teach students to cope with adversity and to persist to the successful completion of a task.

Cross-Cultural Communication: A Critical Dimension of Effective Education, discusses cultural differences that can lead to communication problems in the classroom and suggests behaviors that affirm rather than devaluate a minority student's culture. Since our educational institutions tend to reflect the norms and values of the majority culture, cultural misunderstandings often have a negative effect on a minority student's academic performance. *Cross-Cultural Communication: A Critical Dimension of Effective Education* assists teachers to recognize and utilize student diversity in ways that enhance academic identity.

Learning Styles: The Joy of Diversity, stresses the importance of recognizing differences in learning styles and proposes curriculum and instructional strategies for underachieving females and minority students that take those differences into account.

Increasing Student Achievement Through Enhancing Self-Image helps teachers to better understand the factors that contribute a positive self-image for Black students and to design and implement instructional strategies that will enhance the Black students' academic self-concept. While a positive academic identity is important for all students, it is a particularly critical issue for underachieving Black students.

We hope that you will find this pamphlet series helpful in your efforts to increase the academic achievement of Black and Hispanic students. We look forward to your comments on our publications.

Sheryl Denbo

Sheryl Denbo, Executive Director
Mid-Atlantic Equity Center, 1988

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INTRODUCTION

Everything that occurs within a school, and especially in the classroom, involves *communication*, the act of sharing information. Communication is the medium of instruction, assessment, interpersonal relationships, group interactions, parent/community relations and counseling. Most behavior problems, and their resolution, involve communication issues. In sum, communication permeates education.

Communication is culture bound. That is, the way an individual communicates emanates from his or her culture. Of course, a person may know more than one culture or reflect a combination of cultures. Nonetheless, one basic truth prevails—communication is a product of culture.

Students with different cultural norms are at risk if teachers have little knowledge, sensitivity, or appreciation of the diversity in communication styles. Such teachers may respond to students' diversity with negative attitudes, lowered expectations, culturally inappropriate teaching and assessment procedures, and perceptions of differences as problems. Culturally and communicatively diverse students, in turn, may respond with lowered self-concepts, low academic achievement, perceptions of a hostile school climate, etc., reflected in excessive placements in special education, reduced placements in talented and gifted programs, and high suspension rates.

What Do You Know About Communication and Culture?

All of us know a good deal about communication and culture, or at least think we do. Before we begin to discuss the relationships between culture and communication in this booklet, you may assess your knowledge of culture, communication, and language by taking the quiz presented in Table I, on page 2. Indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statements in the quiz. Your score will provide a perspective on your own understanding of these topics.

TABLE I
What Do I Know About Culture, Communication, And Language?

Directions: Circle A for each statement with which you agree or D for each statement with which you disagree

A D 1. One's culture and one's race are usually one and the same.

A D 2. Culture consists primarily of a group's arts, music, dance, food, language, and dress.

A D 3. Cultural groups are generally mutually exclusive of one another.

A D 4. Cultural traits tend to have a genetic base.

A D 5. In general, people who speak the same language are members of the same cultural group.

A D 6. People are often unaware of some of the rules of their culture.

A D 7. Culture is expressed exclusively by one's verbal behavior.

A D 8. The only significant components of one's communication system are pronunciation rules, vocabulary, and grammatical rules.

A D 9. Standard English is the correct way to speak at all times.

A D 10. There are universal norms for acceptable communicative behavior within the United States.

A D 11. If a student violates the school's cultural or communicative norms, it is usually as an act of defiance.

A D 12. In general, speaking a non-standard dialect suggests low cognitive development.

A D 13. Standard English has more and better structures than other varieties of English.

A D 14. Most standardized tests are based on rules of English used in all linguistic groups.

A D 15. Standard English is White English.

A D 16. In general, students from poor families do not communicate as well as those from middle class families.

A D 17. In general, Black students do not communicate as well as White students.

A D 18. Parents who do not speak standard English should avoid talking to their children to prevent them from developing poor speech habits.

A D 19. If a child is to learn standard English, he/she must unlearn any other variety of English that he/she speaks.

A D 20. Black American English is by definition a nonstandard variety of English.

ANSWERS: Each statement reflects a common myth or stereotype pertaining to communication or culture. Therefore you should have disagreed with each one.

DISCOVERING CHARACTERISTICS OF OTHER CULTURES

Teachers commonly ask: "How can I learn about culture *X*?" Too often, the response is: "There is no comprehensive book (or list) available on culture *X*."

The lack of reading matter on various cultures is, in some ways, a blessing since knowledge of other cultures is better acquired by experience than by study. To that end, teachers should plan to experience cultures different from their own, particularly those of children in their schools and individual classrooms. To be valid, these experiences should incorporate a few basic principles and diagnostic techniques.

As you begin to discover the characteristics of other cultures, remember that cultures vary internally and are changeable. There are usually many cultural differences within a single race or nationality. It will be useful to keep in mind the following principles.

(1) First-hand experience is necessary to understand the many subtleties of any culture.
(2) Feelings of apprehension, loneliness or lack of confidence are common when visiting and experiencing another culture.
(3) Differences between cultures are often experienced as threatening.
(4) What is logical and important in a particular culture may seem irrational and unimportant to an outsider.
(5) In describing another culture, people tend to stress the differences and overlook the similarities.
(6) Stereotyping due to overgeneralization may be inevitable among those who lack frequent contact with another culture.
(7) Personal observations of others about another culture should be regarded with skepticism.

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(8) All cultures have internal variations.
(9) Cultural awareness varies within individuals.
(10) One's own sense of cultural identity often is not evident until one encounters another culture.
(11) Cultures are continually evolving.
(12) Understanding another culture is a continuous process.
(13) One should understand the language of a culture to best understand that culture.

An understanding of these principles can help you to become a more insightful observer of other cultures.

Muriel Saville-Troike (1978) suggests a specific set of questions to guide one who seeks to understand another culture. Some of her questions are presented in Table II on pages 4-6. If used properly, they can provide the basis for interesting, informative, and stimulating discussions among teachers, students, administrators, and parents.

TABLE II
Questions to Ask About Culture
(From Saville-Troike, 1978)

Family Structure
Who is considered to belong in the family?
What are the rights, roles, and responsibilities of the members?

Life Cycle
What are the important stages, periods, and transitions in life?
What behaviors are inappropriate or unacceptable for children at various ages?

Roles
What roles are available to whom?
How are roles acquired?

Interpersonal Relationships
How do people greet each other?
Who may disagree with whom?
How are insults expressed?

Communication
What languages and dialects are spoken?
What are the characteristics of speaking "well"?
What roles, attitudes, and personality traits are associated with particular aspects of verbal and non-verbal behavior?

Decorum and Discipline
How do people behave at home and in public?
What means of discipline are used?

Religion
What religious roles and authority are recognized?
What should an outsider not know, or acknowledge knowing?

Health and Hygiene
How are illness and death explained?
How are specific illnesses treated?

Food
What is eaten, in what order, and how often?
What are the rules for table manners, offering foods, handling foods, discarding foods?

Holidays and Celebrations
What holidays are observed? For what purposes?
Which holidays are important for children?
What cultural values are instilled in children during holidays?

Dress and Personal Appearance
What significance does dress have for social identity?
What is the concept and value of beauty and attractiveness?

Values
What traits and attributes in self, others are important? Bad?
What things and attributes in the world are important? Bad?

History and Traditions
How are history and tradition passed on to the young?
How do cultural understandings of history differ from "scientific" facts or literate history?

Education
What are the purposes of education?
What kinds of learning are favored?
What teaching and learning methods are used in the home?
What are parental expectations for boys versus girls?

Work and Play
What behaviors are considered "work" and "play"?
What kinds of work are prestigious and why?

Time and Space
What is considered "on time"?
What is the importance of punctuality?
How important is speed of performance?
How are groups organized spatially by age, gender, and role?

Natural Phenomena
Who or what is responsible for rain, thunder, floods, hurricanes, etc.?
Are behavioral taboos associated with natural phenomena?

Pets and Animals
Which animals are valued and for what reasons?
What animals are considered appropriate and inappropriate as pets?

Art and Music
What forms of art and music are most highly valued?
What forms of art and music are considered appropriate for children to perform or appreciate?

Expectations and Aspirations

Do parents expect and desire assimilation of children to the dominant culture, language, or dialect?

What cultural values are expected to be maintained despite the degree of formal education?

CULTURE, COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

Now that you have sharpened your "cultural eye," let us look at how culture influences students' language skills and their learning of standard English, the language of education.

To help us, we will keep in mind the concept of *communicative competence* (Hymes, 1962) based on knowledge of both the rules of language *structure* and of language *use* within a given culture.

A major responsibility of teachers at all grade levels is to teach the language and communication skills needed for academic success and for success in the business/professional world. Many children come to the school from cultures which use different, though valid, communication and language systems from those considered as "normal" in the classroom.

The study of sociolinguistics can help us to understand different systems to improve the quality of our instruction for language and communication skills development.

Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguists examine social and cultural influences on language behavior. Among the most important concepts to emerge from their study are those relating to dialects and language standards.

Sociolinguists have documented the presence of dialects in every language. These dialects, all of which are legitimate, are associated with educational, economic, social, and historical conditions. To linguists, the word "dialect" refers to a way of speaking a language, *not* a *poor* way of speaking.

While all dialects of a given language are linguistically legitimate, some achieve social prestige. In a literate, economically developed society, the dialect spoken by those with the most formal education, the highest socioeconomic status and the greatest degree of political power tends to acquire the greatest social prestige and typically becomes the

standard for the culture, for writing and the medium of education.

Standard dialects also provide a medium through which persons from different linguistic backgrounds can communicate with one another. Social and regional variations may exist *within* standard dialects so long as they conform to specified linguistic rules, largely grammatical in nature. Standard English, therefore, should not be considered "Northern English" or "White English", since it is spoken, in one form or another, in all parts of the United States and by some members of all racial groups.

At the other end of the social spectrum, so-called nonstandard dialects are generally spoken by the "have nots," the powerless, the less-educated, the less well-off economically and those of relatively low social prominence. While legitimate linguistically, these dialects tend to be unacceptable to the "haves"—vs. the "have nots"—of society.

In American English, nonstandard dialects exist within all racial, ethnic, and regional groups (See Table III). Each dialect reflects a distinct interaction of social, historical, cultural, and educational factors. All are legitimate in that they represent the concepts, needs, and intentions of their speakers.

Table III
Some Varieties of "Non-Standard" American English

Applachian English
'He just kept a-begging and a-crying and a-wanting to go out.' (He persisted in begging, crying, and wanting to leave.)

Athabascan English (Alaska)
'Most time we play games.' (Most of the time we play games.)

Black English Vernacular
'He be scared, but I be brave.' (He is usually scared, but I am usually brave.)

General American Nonstandard English
'Don't nobody want none.' (Nobody wants any.)

Keaukaha English (Hawaii)
'I no can place that name.' (I cannot place that name.)

New York City Nonstandard English
'She's a good cook, your mother.' (Your mother is a good cook.)

Southern American Nonstandard English
'I mon' rest.' (I am going to rest.)

Spanish-Influenced English
'Carol left yesterday. I think is coming back tomorrows.' (Carol left yesterday. I think she is coming back tomorrow.)

For a variety of reasons, including negative public attitudes and inadequate teaching models, nonstandard English speakers often do not effectively learn standard language in school. Many who do learn it do so at a great price: devaluation or rejection of their own home or

community dialect. Without competence in standard English, many will fail academically and face diminished career, social, and life options. Yet if competence in standard English is coupled with rejection of one's own home or community dialect, it may lead to serious psychological and identity problems (Chambers, 1983).

In the United States, the schools' failure to teach standard English is reflected in the poor performance of nonstandard English speakers on achievement, aptitude, and diagnostic tests. Perhaps the most alarming evidence of this failure is the low performance of nonstandard English speakers on tests used to place students in special education programs and related services. Virtually all of these tests presume competence in standard English (Oakland, 1977).

Many Black children, usually from working class homes or communities, come to school speaking what is referred to as a nonstandard variety of English. This variety, often referred to as Black English Vernacular, is thought by most sociolinguists to reflect African influences, reinforced by social isolation, segregation, and group identity.

Cultural Differences In Discourse

In addition to differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical structures among cultural groups, variations also exist in the rules for general discourse, covering such specific behaviors as story-telling (narrative) and conversation.

In communicating with one another, teachers and students naturally will follow the assumptions and rules of their respective cultures. Their exchanges are governed by rules for discourse, and rules for stringing sentences together. Discourse rules govern such aspects of communication as:

- opening or closing a conversation
- turn-taking during conversations
- interruptions
- silence as a communicative device
- appropriate topics of conversation
- humor and when to use it
- non-verbal behavior which accompanies conversation
- laughter as a communicative device
- appropriate amount of speech to be used by participants
- logical ordering of events during discourse.

With respect to narrative, Gee (1985) claims that story-telling during sharing time in the early school years is an important device for literacy training. Both he and Michaels (1981) report that schools and teachers prefer linear, single-topic story-telling, the style that is compatible with strategies encountered in later reading and writing activities.

These *topic centered* stories are characterized by tightly structured sentences reflecting on a single or small set of highly related topics and

presume that speaker and listener have little shared knowledge. Thus, the stories tend to be very explicit with great detail. Emphasis is more on telling than on showing.

Gee and Michaels note further that many working class Black children seem to prefer a *topic associating* narrative style that is characteristic of oral cultures. In this style, story-tellers presume a shared knowledge with the audience, do more showing than telling, and imply linkages among a wide range of topics which need not be presented in temporal sequence.

While both narrative styles provide meaningful ways for children to talk about their experiences and realities, research shows that school children who tell topic associating stories tend to be called on less and interrupted more often than children who tell topic centered stories (Michaels, 1981). They also tend to be wrongly considered disorganized or poor thinkers. Finally, those children are more likely to be referred erroneously for psychological assessments or placed in special education.

Examples of Cultural and Communication Tendencies

In this section, you will find examples of cultural and communicative *tendencies* observable among Black and White students from several cultural groups in the United States. Tendencies are not universal: That is to say, that in order to avoid generalizations and stereotypes about cultural groups, variations within culture must always be considered. Highly educated people of a given cultural group are less likely to reveal indigenous (traditional) language and communication patterns than less-educated persons. Moreover, many people communicate in ways influenced by other cultures.

Based on a review of literature and anecdotal reports, Taylor (1985) has listed verbal and non-verbal communication styles of *working class* Black Americans as they contrast with those of Anglo-Americans and middle class persons of other ethnic groups. Some of these characteristics are presented in Table IV on pages 11-12. Similar comparisons may be made between other cultural groups in the typical American classroom.

Unfamiliarity with cultural communication differences can lead to misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and even unintentional insult. For example, the Black student who shows little reserve in stating his/her feelings may be misperceived as a hostile, perhaps a dangerous, person. The student, meanwhile, may see himself as an honest person willing to share feelings as a necessary first step in resolving problems.

Similarly, the Black student who looks away from speakers during conversation may be erroneously perceived as not paying attention or showing disrespect. The Black student who freely states his/her positions to the teacher may be considered as challenging the teacher's authority, when the student may be demonstrating honesty and pride in the value of his/her own opinions.

Teachers, as all human beings, have their own expectations about behavior. The teacher should 1) recognize incongruency between his/her expectations and those of the child; 2) make certain that behavioral norms in the classroom are sufficiently broad to embrace all cultural groups; and 3) teach the rules of standard American culture and the reasons for them.

Have you witnessed any of the behaviors identified in Table IV on pages 11-12? How did you interpret what you saw? Which of them do you find represented in your classes? What characteristics could you add to the list from other cultural groups? What in-group variations have you observed?

Table IV. Examples of Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Contrasts Among Some Black Americans and Some Anglo-Americans

Some Black Americans	Some Anglo-Americans
Hats and sunglasses may be considered by men as adornments much like jewelry, and may be worn indoors	Hats and sunglasses are considered utilitarian by men; and as outerwear to be removed indoors
Touching another's hair is considered offensive	Touching another's hair is a sign of affection
Asking personal questions of a person met for the first time may be seen as improper and intrusive	Inquiring about jobs, family, and so forth of someone one has met for the first time is seen as friendly
Use of direct questions is sometimes considered harassment (e.g., asking when something will be finished is like rushing that person to finish)	Use of direct questions for personal information is permissable
"Breaking in" during conversation by participants is usually tolerated. Competition for the floor is granted to the person who is most assertive	Rules on turn-taking in conversation dictate that one person has the floor at a time until all of his or her points are made
Conversations are regarded as private between the recognized participants; "butting in" may be seen as eavesdropping and not tolerated	Adding points of information or insights to a conversation in which one is not engaged is sometimes seen as helpful
The term "you people" is typically seen as pejorative and racist	The term "you people" is tolerated
Listeners are expected to avert eyes to indicate respect and attention	Listeners are expected to look at speaker directly to indicate respect and attention

Some Black Americans	Some Anglo-Americans
Speakers are expected to look at listeners directly	Speakers are expected to avert eyes during speaking in informal situations
Confederate flags and Black lawn ornaments are considered offensive and racist	Symbols of the old South, such as confederate flags and Black lawn ornaments are considered acceptable by many
Purposely including a minority person in group activities is seen as tokenism	Including a minority person in group activities is seen as democratic
Adoption of dance patterns or music styles of another cultural group is suspect or considered offensive	Adoption of dance patterns or music styles of another cultural group is seen as free and desirable exchange
Talking "Black" by outsiders without authorization is an insult	Borrowing of language forms from another group is permissable and encouraged
Showing emotions during conflict is acceptable, perceived as honesty, and viewed as the first step toward the resolution of a problem	Showing emotions during conflict is perceived as the beginning of a "fight," discordant, and an interference to conflict resolution

The Significance of Culture-Based Communicative Behavior in School

As stated earlier, communication is basic to education, and it emanates from culture. Thus, it is most important that teachers consider cultural and communication issues if they are to provide quality education to all students in a secure and fair environment.

A variety of cross-cultural communication problems can arise in school, and it is important that teachers not automatically blame the student, the student's family or their culture. Problems often result from misunderstandings or value conflicts between teachers and students who are each obeying different culturally based communication rules. Some common problems linked to cultural and communicative diversity are presented in Table V on page 13.

In the remainder of this booklet we will focus on strategies for 1) improving interpersonal/intergroup relationships; 2) teaching standard English to non-standard English speaking children; 3) testing and assessing in culturally valid ways; and 4) resolving communication differences and discipline problems.

Table V. Problems That May Result From Culture and Communication Conflicts in the Classroom

Student Characteristics	Inappropriate Responses	Possible Impact on Student
	Some Examples	**Some Examples**
Diverse Cultural Assumptions	• Negative attitudes towards dialect variation	• Lowered self-image
	• Lower student expectations	• Lowered achievement and excessive special education placements
	• Excessive interruptions	• Low student participation: disproportionately low placement in talented and gifted programs
Diverse Verbal Behavior	• Diversity ignored in teaching process	• Lowered self-expectations
	• Insufficient attention to student speech	• Excessive speech/ language therapy placements
Diverse Non-Verbal Behavior	• Frequent misunderstandings and interpretations of student	• Lowered achievement in oral standard English
	• Perception of student as disorganized	• Lowered achievement and academic self-concept
Diverse Story-Telling and Conversational Rules	• Perception of student as poor thinker	• Perception of frequent social insults (unintentional) from teachers and other students
	• Perception of communication differences as discipline problem	• Frequent misunderstandingas and misinterpretations from school personnel and other students
	• Perception of communication differences as social insults (unintentional)	• Perception of negative school climate
		• Interpersonal/intergroup conflicts
		• Poor performance on tests and assessments

USING CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS

In a diverse community, differences exist in the communication styles of students, teachers and parents, and of administrators and non-instructional staff as well. For teachers, perhaps the most important reason for understanding cross-cultural communication is to improve their relations with Black and other non-White students and parents, since communication differences, if left ignored, will inevitably lead to misinterpretations and often to conflicts that erode the school climate until certain groups of students—usually Black and other minority students—feel unwelcome.

The fact that this occurs is a tragedy, of course. The greater tragedy, however, is that we do not always know how to eliminate or minimize this discord.

Tactics For Removing Cross-Cultural Communication Barriers

Once we have established the prerequisites for understanding communication issues, we must then remove cross-cultural barriers from the environment. The major tactics fall under two categories:

1. Removing language which appears to stereotype students
2. Reducing violations of cultural rules during discussions and conversations

With respect to removing stereotypical language, the following strategies might be useful:

— Be aware of words, images, and situations that suggest that all or most members of a racial group are the same.
Example: "Why can't Joe ever be on time?"
"He's black, isn't he?"

— Avoid using qualifiers that reinforce racial and ethnic stereotypes.
Example: Does the following sentence contain a hidden stereotype? "The articulate black student." ("Black students typically have low verbal skills.")

— Avoid racial indentification except when it is essential to communication.
Example: No: "Judy, an outgoing Black female student . . ."
Yes: "Judy, an outgoing student . . ."

— Be aware of the possible negative implications of color symbolism and usage that could offend people or reinforce bias.
Examples: "black market," "black magic"

— Beware of language that has questionable racial or ethnic connotations.
Examples: "culturally deprived," "culturally disadvantaged," "you people"

With respect to changing communicative behaviors which may violate cultural rules of others, the following strategies may be useful:

— Be aware of rules for attentiveness during conversation.
Example: The constant maintenance of eye contact while listening during a conversation often violates a conversational rule in working class Black and Hispanic cultures.

— Be aware of rules regarding the distance between speakers during conversation.
Example: In some cultures, speakers stand close enough to touch often. In other cultures, distance is maintained to denote respect.

— Be aware that objects, characters and symbols may reflect different beliefs or values for different groups.
Examples: The confederate flag and Uncle Remus stories may offend Blacks because they reflect the culture of slavery and the old South.

— Be aware that cultures vary in what they consider funny or taboo.
Examples: Ethnic humor is often perceived by minority persons as evidence of racial prejudice. Discussion of in-group cultural rules and behaviors with outsiders is considered taboo within many cultures.

— Be aware of different rules for turn-taking during conversations.
Example: Black children frequently perceive "breaking in" to reinforce or disagree with another's point to be perfectly permissible, indeed desirable.

— Cultures may use different standards for loudness, speed of delivery, silence, and time to respond to another's point.

— Be aware of different cultural rules for entering into conversations in progress.

Example: Blacks tend to consider conversations as private between recognized participants. Therefore, anyone, including the teacher, who "butts in" is viewed as an eavesdropper and rebuked.

One way to improve relationships across cultural lines, particularly in the upper grades, is to develop a unit on "Communicating with One Another," to teach students how to communicate more effectively, and how to address and negotiate differences.

It can also be useful for teachers to brainstorm with one another on how to remove communication barriers. After brainstorming, a well designed management process could lead to better relations among staff and generate effective activities at the school and classroom levels.

It may also be useful for teachers to ask parents of their school's various cultural communities to identify sources of miscommunication and socially offensive behavior/language. Parents may be asked to suggest ways that school personnel can improve communication with their children, with parents and their community.

While schools have a responsibility to teach students the behavioral codes of the society at large, and to expect students to adhere to them, they have a similar responsibility to reduce culturally induced discipline problems and to avoid misinterpreting cultural differences as behavioral problems.

Patton's (1986) research on cross-cultural communication sources and perceptions of discipline problems at the junior high school level provides excellent reading on this topic. Other readings are: Gappa and Pearce's (1983) *Removing Bias: Guidelines for Student-Faculty Communication;* Kochmann's (1981) *Black and White: Styles in Conflict;* and Pickens (1982) *Without Bias.*

TEACHING STANDARD ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF NONSTANDARD ENGLISH DIALECTS

There is little disagreement that educational success and expanded life options (social and career) are linked to competence in standard English. An alarming percentage of students who speak nonstandard English are failing to acquire standard English, the language of education. Moreover, many students who do acquire standard English do so while being taught to reject the language of their home, community, and peers. In the process they are robbed of an effective element of social solidarity, which is an important element of the cultural heritage.

Why Do Nonstandard English Speaking Children Fail to Acquire Standard English?

Many arguments have been advanced to account for the low achievement levels of nonstandard English-speaking children, particularly Black children, in acquiring oral competence in standard English. The most tenable argument suggests that the philosophy, assumptions, and traditional classroom methodologies employed in language arts education (Taylor, 1985) have failed because they have been prescriptive and corrective and have focused too much on language structure rather than on communicative competence. Moreover, traditional teaching methodologies have not typically been culturally sensitive nor made use of indigenous, nonstandard dialects. These significant lacks are probably due to naivete or negative attitudes toward language variation on the part of language arts teachers.

Towards More Effective Teaching of Standard English

In recent years, a number of U.S. educators have begun to devise and implement instructional strategies which take into account the language that students bring into the classroom. In general, these strategies are based on modern sociolinguistics theory and on established principles of second language teaching.

In 1981, California became the first state to recognize the importance of indigenous dialects in teaching standard English. Focusing primarily on the language of Black nonstandard English speaking children, California's State Board of Public Instruction stated in part:

> Many Black learners come to the school setting speaking a language that is linguistically different from standard English. The language they speak is an integral part of the Afro-American culture. . .It is a unique language which serves a uniquely rich culture. However, the school setting and that of the larger American society, including the economic and commerical communities, represent another linguistic sphere in which the student must learn to move and speak successfully. To the extent that the young student fluently communicates in either language, he increases his opportunities in both realms. . .
>
> Therefore, to provide proficiency in English to California students who are speakers of Black Language and to provide equal educational opportunities for these students, it is recommended that the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education hereby recognizes:
>
> That structured oral language practice in standard English should be provided on an ongoing basis.
>
> That special program strategies are required to address the needs of speakers of Black language.
>
> That parents and the general public should be informed of implications of educational strategies to address the linguistic needs of Black students.

Teaching Standard English from A Cultural Perspective

Teaching the standard language from a cultural perspective differs from the traditional language education approach in that it does not blame the victim. In the cultural perspective approach, standard English instruction does not presuppose the devaluation or elimination of a learner's indigenous language. It recognizes that students need to retain their home dialect where its use is appropriate.

There are several major requirements for teaching standard English from a cultural perspective. Instruction should:

(1) Focus on how to communicate as well as on the structure of language.
(2) Maintain an oral basis
(3) Concentrate on the structure of language, situational language requirements and language as a vehicle for thinking.
(4) Be linked to clearly defined long-term goals
(5) Be integrated across the curriculum.

A successful culturally based standard English program recognizes that learning proceeds in an orderly way from the introduction of a particular aspect of language through its mastery. The model which has enjoyed the widest use and greatest success was designed by the San Diego Oral Language Program. It has been used (with modifications) in Standard English as a Second Dialect (SESD) programs in Dallas (Texas) and in Richmond and Oakland (California). The model lists necessary steps for learning a new linguistic system while preserving the student's indigenous system. The model includes the following eight steps or stages.

(1) *Developing positive attitudes toward one's own language.* The first and continuing job of the teacher is to counteract negative public and self evaluations of the students' indigenous language. Lessons on the historical development of various dialects and on language diversity are useful in accomplishing this goal.
(2) *Developing awareness of language varieties.* Students develop a sensitivity to the various forms of a given language via stories in standard English, poems in different dialects, and records, tapes or video recordings of various speakers. At this stage the specific elements of likeness and differences are emphasized.
(3) *Recognizing, labeling and contrasting dialects.* Students learn to recognize differences in various languages and dialects and to associate specific features with each linguistic system.
(4) *Comprehending meanings.* Students learn to recognize differences in meanings (and intentions) when an idea is translated from one language or dialect to another.
(5) *Recognizing situational communication requirements.* Students determine the types of speech appropriate to various situations.
(6) *Producing in structured situations.* Students practice producing successive approximations of standard English. Initially, students follow a model at this stage: i.e, a script, choral reading, poems, etc.
(7) *Producing in controlled situations.* Students receive instruction and practice in producing standard English without a model, e.g., role-playing, retelling a story, etc.
(8) *Matching the language to the situation.* Students practice speaking appropriately in real life, spontaneous situations leading to communicative competence.

Before beginning to teach standard English from a cultural perspective, the teacher and school need a clear a language arts philosophy which embraces modern principles of ethnology, sociolinguistics, and second language instruction. The philosophy and assumptions statement developed by the Richmond (CA) Unified School District is a good example of what schools and teachers may usefully adopt. (See Appendix I).

Finally, before beginning program implementation, the teacher and school community must become thoroughly familiar with general principles of second dialect instruction. These include:

(1) Instruction should be preceded by a nonbiased assessment of the learner's knowledge of his or her first dialect and of the second dialect.
(2) The student must feel positive toward his own existing dialect.
(3) Students must want to learn another dialect. If motivation is not present, the teacher must help the learner discover the advantages of acquiring the second dialect.
(4) Instruction must consider the language goals of the learner, his/her family, and his/her community.
(5) Instruction must take into account cultural values associated with learning and teaching.
(6) Instruction must accommodate the learning styles and preferences of the learners.
(7) In second dialect instruction, both teacher and learner must be able to contrast the linguistic and communicative rules of the existing and targeted dialects.
(8) Linguistic and communicative features of the existing dialect should be compared with those of the targeted dialect.
(9) Instruction should be integrated with students' experiences.
(10) Both teacher and learner must believe that it is possible to acquire a second dialect.

What Is A Good Standard English As A Second Dialect (SESD) Approach?

Minimal standards must be established for evaluating culturally based language and communication lessons. These standards, generally derived from the fields of ethnography and sociolinguistics, will ensure that the SESD program will:

(1) Permit students to demonstrate their listening skills by summarizing, responding, paraphrasing or following directions.
(2) Allow varied and frequent opportunities for students to communicate with each other.
(3) Provide students opportunities to summarize, analyze, or evaluate oral or written communication by themselves, their peers, or the teacher.

(4) Provide students opportunities to listen and respond appropriately to the teacher, their classmates, or audio-visual materials.
(5) Allow students to use speech for different purposes in a variety of situations: e.g., persuading, informing, imagining, questioning, asserting, etc.
(6) Teach students how to evaluate the effectiveness of their own communication.
(7) Stress that learning new speech patterns is linked to short term and long term goals.
(8) Underscore the importance of situation, audience or topic during communication.
(9) Indicate that oral communication activities will be included throughout the total curriculum.
(10) Have a clear language and communication focus.

The Richmond, Los Angeles, and the Dade County Public Schools in Miami, Florida, have developed lessons and support materials for implementing Standard English as a Second Dialect instructional programs. Names and addresses of information sources on SES programs are presented in Appendix II.

How Can Aides and Parents Help?

The teaching of a second dialect cannot be solely the responsibility of the classroom teacher, no more than it can be limited to the language arts classroom. Teacher aides and parents can support the instructional process and assist children's language development in general and SESD instruction in particular by:

- Encouraging children to speak in a variety of situations and before many audiences.
- Making talking a frequent, enjoyable, and secure activity.
- Modeling and expanding the child's speech into language appropriate for the topic, situation, and audience.
- Pointing out what language and communication behaviors are appropriate as situations occur.
- Discouraging teasing about speech.
- Not overcorrecting the child's speech.
- Linking corrections of speech to the situation.
- Providing the school and teachers with examples of speech used in the home and community for use in instruction, assessment, and teacher training.
- Reinforcing writing or reading activities with activities that include talking.
- Providing an abundance of verbal stimuli for the child irrespective of language or communication competencies.

COMMUNICATION DIFFERENCES, TEST PERFORMANCE AND EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT

Virtually all tests and all assessment procedures used in schools and classrooms require students to manipulate information using tools of communication. The tests and procedures typically presume competence in standard English and in the communication rules of mainstream, educated society.

Much discussion and research in the last decade has focused on test bias, and on culturally fair methods for assessing students' behavior and knowledge. Indeed, a number of court cases and legislative initiatives have prohibited the use of culturally discriminatory tests and assessment procedures (e.g., Public Law 94-142: the Education for all Handicapped Children Act).

Culturally biased tests can adversely affect minority students, particularly those who do not speak Standard English. For example, they can contribute to:

- lower expectations of student performance
- negative attitudes towards low-performing students
- lower self-esteem and expectations by students
- lower expectations of student performance by parents
- inappropriate placement of minority children in special education and speech/language therapy programs.
- insufficient designation of cultural and racial minority children for talented and gifted programs.

While classroom teachers do not typically administer standardized tests, they generally do use their own assessment procedures in their own classrooms. Also, students are placed in their classes on the basis of standardized test results administered by others, and teachers can have their expectations of students influenced by such tests. Furthermore,

teachers typically take part in the referral and evaluation process, to determine whether a student needs special education or related services. For all these reasons, teachers should understand test and assessment bias and should know what to do about it.

Sources of Bias in Tests and Assessment Procedures

In general teachers should be aware of six major sources of test/assessment bias. They are:

(1) Situation bias
(2) Directions bias
(3) Value bias
(4) Linguistic bias
(5) Format bias
(6) Cultural misinterpretations

Examples of the six types of bias are presented in Table VI below.

Table VI. Sources of Communication and Communication Related Biases in Tests and Assessment Procedures

Situational Bias	Mismatches between examiner and examinee regarding the societal rules of language: e.g. Sarcastic answers to obvious question *Examiner* What time does the clock say? *Examinee* Everybody knows clocks don't talk.
Directions Bias	Test directions involve linguistic complexities unfamiliar to the examinee: e.g. "None of the following is true except . . ." Incorrectly interpreted as "all of the following is true except . . ."
Value Bias	Examinee is required to exhibit a particular moral or ethical preference: e.g. One who is dishonest is a) an offender, b) a politician, c) an ambassador, d) an officer
Linguistic Bias	Test presumes that examinee is competent in standard English: e.g. which sentence is ungrammatical a) They saw Rose, b) You done it wrong, c) My brother has never eaten, d) Don't use too much
Format Bias	Test procedures or requirements are inconsistent with examinee's cognitive and/or learning style: e.g. "Select the *best* answer to the following . . ."

Cultural Misinterpretations	Examiner erroneously interprets cultural practices of examinee: e.g. child who exhibits silence as a natural reaction to an unfamiliar adult examiner is diagnosed as non-verbal, or who does not respond quickly to test items as unknowledgeable

Teachers need to be aware of how communicative factors can influence test peformance, and of the impact of their own evaluations of students' performance on tests. For example, if students fail to understand test directions, they may respond incorrectly to a whole series of questions. If they are not competent in standard English, they may answer questions wrongly because of incorrect analyses of their content. If they prefer a field dependent, (synthesizing) rather than a field independent, (analytical), cognitive learning style, they may have difficulty with formats which seek best answers to questions when all answers contain an element of truth. Further, they may hold different values than those assumed by the teacher or they may obey different communicative rules for verbal behavior in the social situation in which tests questions are asked. Finally, the teacher may misinterpret a student's culturally based communicative styles (e.g., silence and response time) and draw erroneous conclusions about the student's knowledge.

What To Do About Assessment Bias

It is not reasonable to expect that teachers will develop their own culturally fair tests and assessment procedures. However, teachers can contribute to a more positive assessment environment for Black and minority students. They can address the cultural bias issue in the following ways:

(1) Be certain that all students understand the test directions.
(2) Be certain that the test does not presume linguistic knowledge that students may not have unless, of course, the test is designed to assess knowledge of a specific language or dialect.
(3) The test should not require students to articulate values which they do not share.
(4) The test should be compatible with the preferred learning styles of the test taker.
(5) Situational and interactional constraints must be considered from a cultural perspective in evaluating oral communication behavior on tests.
(6) In the scoring or interpretation of test performance, the student's response style must be considered.
(7) When referring children for special testing or placement in special education be certain that your evaluations are not skewed by cultural differences in behavior and language.

(8) Do not include culturally discriminatory items in your tests.
(9) Accept as correct those test answers which are considered valid within the test-taker's culture, even if the particular answer is not listed in the manual as being correct.
(10) Consider two scores for tests which have a culture component:
    (a) culturally unadjusted score
    (b) culturally adjusted score
(11) Support efforts to decrease reliance on standardized tests for assessments, using alternative assessment procedures where possible and appropriate.
(12) Support efforts to involve parents and community in assessing test findings (Taylor and Payne, 1983).

New standardized tests and assessment procedures are needed which contain no cultural bias. Until those tests are available, teachers should be skeptical of the results of most standardized tests administered to culturally and linguistically diverse children and should exercise caution in using these results for making placement decisions.

COMMUNICATION DIFFERENCES AND DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

Most educators would agree that the schools have a responsibility to establish an educational environment that encourages positive learning experiences for all students. Many would also claim that schools should be expected to teach students the social behaviors which are considered acceptable by the society at large, as well as the sanctions which are likely to be applied when acceptable standards are violated. In the light of these dual and sometimes conflicting imperatives the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates for minority students throughout the nation are cause for considerable concern. In 1979, for example, the National Advisory Committee on Black Higher Education and Black Universities and Colleges reported that while students from minority ethnic groups comprised approximately 25% of the nation's public school population, they comprised 40% of those suspended. A 1982 Fact Sheet on Institutional Racism revealed that while 16% of the nation's students were Black, they comprised 29% of all suspensions and 27% of all expulsions.

In a 1984 report of the Minority Relations Monitoring Committee of Montgomery County, Maryland, it was stated that:

> . . . Nowhere is the school system more vulnerable to the charge of being "unfair" in dealing with its students than in the manner in which it manages student behavior. . . Clearly the difference in suspension rates of White and Black students in many of the senior high schools is so broad as to constitute a serious threat to the opportunity for an equal education.

Many reasons are given to explain the high rate of discipline problems among minority students, particularly Blacks. Some blame the institution; others simply blame the victim.

INSTITUTION EXPLANATIONS

- negative school climate
- racial and ethnic bias
- inadequate classroom management
- inappropriate educational placements
- inappropriate teacher expectations
- differential applications of the rules for student conduct

VICTIM EXPLANATIONS

- low student motivation
- cultural disrespect for rules
- unfamiliarity with rules of school and the mainstream society
- lackadasical discipline standards in student's home and community

Before drawing any conclusions relative to the cause of the high rate of discipline problems and suspension/expulsion rates for minority students, it would be useful to explore the major types of student behaviors that teachers report as being unacceptable. Mitchell (1983) reports that five of the nine most frequently reported behaviors involve cultural and communicative issues: e.g., verbal threats, classroom disruptions, disrespect, etc.

You may recall that the claim was made that every human encounter—positive or negative—reflects cultural assumptions and communication rules for expressing those assumptions. This claim leads us to advance two important hypotheses about cross-cultural communication and school discipline problems:

(1) Discord is inevitable among students when they have different perceptions of what is appropriate and acceptable behavior and rules for communication.
(2) Teachers and other school personnel are more likely to *perceive* students' behaviors, including their communication behaviors, as being disruptive and discordant when those behaviors diverge from the norms of the school.

Schools reflect culture — mainly the culture of the mainstream society. Patton (1986) makes the case more directly. She claims that schools are a microculture with a distinct system of preferred and required communicative behaviors. This culture, she asserts, is more congruent with some cultures than other. Typically, it reflects the values and norms of the immediate community. Students who come to school with cultural and communicative norms which are incongruent with the schools's norms are predictably more likley, she argues, to engage in unacceptable behavior.

Sources of Cultural and Communicative Incongruencies Which Lead to Discipline Problems

Research suggests that there are several categories of communicative behavior which are considered unacceptable in many, if not most, school environments. While some of these unacceptable behaviors do not result in sanctions, many do. Examples of behaviors which almost always are punished are presented below. Please note that each of these behaviors may be in conflict with communication rules for a given cultural group. The teacher's task is to determine through reading, discussion and observation which perceived behaviors could have a different cultural significance for the groups represented in his/her classroom.

- Challenging the teacher's authority
- Using obscene language in class
- Using obscene language with other students
- Not listening quietly when teacher is presenting a lesson
- Moving around the room when teacher is presenting a lesson
- Interrupting another student
- Seeking assistance from another student on a test
- Not waiting until one person has finished speaking before taking a turn
- Ignoring teacher's directions
- Responding in a loud voice
- Socializing in class
- Tardiness to class
- Not walking away during discord
- Using physical means to settle a conflict
- Showing emotion during discord

What Do We Do About Cultural and Communicative Sources of Student Misbehavior?

While cultural differences may play an important role in apparent discipline problems in the school, they cannot account for all student misbehavior. After all, the majority of students, including those from minority groups, learn, accept, and conform to the rules of schools. Yet many discipline problems *may* result from students' failure to know, accept, or conform to school norms which are either divergent or incongruent with their own cultural or communicative norms.

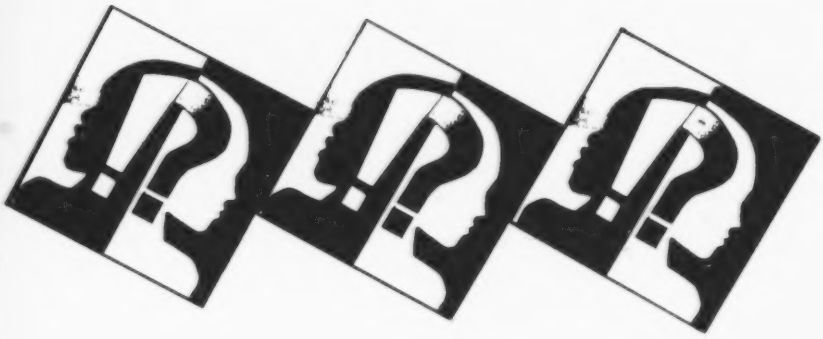
School personnel should be open to examining the causes of perceived misbehavior in the classroom. In those cases where school or classroom norms are inconsiderate of cultural differences, revisions of school norms would seem to be most appropriate. Where school norms are

generally congruent with norms across the cultural spectrum of the school community, the school has a responsibility to teach those norms to the student. ONE CANNOT EXPECT THAT ALL STUDENTS COME TO SCHOOL WITH PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OR ACCEPTANCE OF SCHOOL NORMS.

In any case, schools, as all institutions, must establish reasonable rules of conduct. But the rules should be sensitive to the cultural assumptions, values, and communication expectations of the total school community.

The following activities are useful in considering cross-cultural communication issues for addressing school discipline problems:

(1) Devise a plan for teaching all students the acceptable communicative behaviors of the school and the justifications for them.
(2) Devise a plan for teaching students the nature, genesis, and need for rules to govern school and classroom communicative behavior, while simultaneously recognizing the validity of other behaviors in other settings, such as within students' homes and communities.
(3) Determine which school or classroom norms may be in conflict with cultural or communicative norms of specific minority group students.
(4) Engage in discussions with colleagues on how school or classroom norms might be revised to make them more sensitive to the various cultural groups in the school community.



IN SUMMARY

This booklet has reviewed several basic concepts relating to culture, communication, and language. We have shown how these issues affect human behavior generally, and school life in particular. Also, suggestions have been made relative to instruction, assessment, interpersonal relationships, and discipline.

You might now re-take the introductory test on page 2. Any change reflected in your score will give you a measure of what you have learned about culture and communication.

To put into use what you have learned, consider working with your colleagues to:

- integrate cross-cultural communication topics and materials into the curriculum;
- educate those who administer standardized tests about the styles of communication used by various cultural groups;
- review and revise classroom tests to eliminate cultural bias;
- address cross-cultural communication issues in all phases of school life.

Suggestions for classroom utilization have been made throughout the booklet. The rest is up to YOU. Cross-cultural communication is an on-going process. Mistakes are inevitable, but sensitivity to the issues can enhance the quality of education for all students, and for Black and culturally diverse students in particular.

APPENDIX I

PHILOSOPHY AND ASSUMPTIONS OF RICHMOND CALIFORNIA STANDARD ENGLISH PROGRAM (ABSTRACTED)

Effective communication is a basic skill to be mastered by all students. Each student enters school with a well developed language system which should be respected and utilized, where appropriate, by the classroom teacher in planning and implementing standard English instruction.

Students need to be taught standard English for use in those situations where its use is appropriate while, at the same time, be reinforced in the value of the home language.

Assumptions

I. On the Role of Oral Communication in Education

Learning in the school setting is dependent upon communication—spoken, written, and/or non-verbal. In general, oral communication serves as the foundation for all other types of linguistic behavior in and out of school.

II. On Standard English

In a heterogenous linguistic and cultural society such as the United States, a common ground of communication must be established for many types of information exchange. In the United States, standard English serves that purpose. Competence in this dialect provides an individual with a wider range of academic, esthetic, social, business, and professional options than would otherwise be available. One of the responsibilities of schools is to teach all students to read, write, speak and auditorily comprehend standard English in situations, topics, disciplines, and audiences where it is required. The acquisition of these skills is expected to provide students with a necessary tool for academic and/or career success.

III. On Home and Community Languages

The need for a standard language as a unifying force in a heterogenous society does not diminish, in any way, the value of the languages and dialects of the various cultural groups within a local community. These indigenous language forms not only serve as an integral cultural and historical link for all groups, they also provide an important means of expression and creativity for individual speakers. DISRESPECT AND NON-

RECOGNITION OF HOME LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS CAN LEAD TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEGATIVE SELF-CONCEPTS, POOR MORALE, AND LOW MOTIVATION IN LEARNERS.

IV. On the Characteristics of a Culturally Based Oral Communication Program

A culturally based oral communication program recognizes and celebrates linguistic diversity while teaching students standard English. It teaches verbal and non-verbal communication which meets the demands of different audiences, situation, and topics. Instruction is sensitive to the aspirations and needs of the learner. It respects and builds on the culture, language, and distinct learning styles the child brings to school and responds to the need to transmit specific skills, and competencies. The curriculum must be based on a sound instructional model which cuts across all phases of the curriculum and school life, and utilizes, where possible, educational materials which are culturally familiar and valid. Finally, the program must contain ongoing external self-evaluations of both the learner and the teacher.

APPENDIX II

INFORMATION SOURCES ON SES PROGRAMS

Office of Bilingual Education
Dade County Public School District
1415 N.E. 2nd Street
Miami, Florida 33132
(305) 376-1454

Dallas Independent School District
3900 Ross Avenue
Dallas, Texas
(214) 426-2966

Standard English Program
Richmond Unified School District
1108 Bissell Avenue
Richmond, California 94802
(415) 234-3825

Standard English Program
Oakland Unified School District
314 East 10th Street
Oakland, California 94606
(415) 836-8269

Language Arts Programs Division
San Diego City Public Schools
Education Center
4100 Normal Street
San Diego, CA 92103
(619) 293-8531

Compensatory Education Services
California Department of Public Instruction
721 Capital Mall, 2nd Floor
Sacremento, California 95814
(916) 445-2590

Proficiency in English Program (PEP)
Los Angeles Unified School District
1320 W. 3rd. Street
Los Angeles, CA 90017
(213) 625-6684

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WASHINGTON, DC

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